

# DISCORDANT DISCOURSE: ARTISTS' BOOKS AND DATABASES

WHERE  
IS THE  
DISCOURSE  
LOCATED?

THE CRAFT DATABASE

**ARTISTS' BOOKS,  
OTIS COLLECTIONS ONLINE**

OTIS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
<http://www.otis.edu/library/artists-books>

HOW DOES THE DATABASE  
PARTICIPATE IN DISCOURSE?

- ❖ Inclusion of objective and descriptive metadata parameters such as “binding,” “process/technique,” and “book type” highlight paratextual qualities of artists' books
- ❖ The use of standardized terminology generally understood and accepted by practitioners
- ❖ Metadata entry requires technical knowledge of the craft of book arts
- ❖ Knowledgeable and trained staff and information professionals input metadata
- ❖ Prospective users are given easily searchable and straightforward data, but limited or no conceptual information about works

THE CRAFT DATABASE PORTENDS A DISCOURSE BUILT AROUND THE PARATEXT OF ARTISTS' BOOKS. THE DISCOURSE BELONGS TO THE MAKERS.

THE CRITICAL DATABASE

**ARTISTS' BOOKS ONLINE  
(ABsONLINE)**

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA  
<http://www.artistsbooksonline.org/index.html>

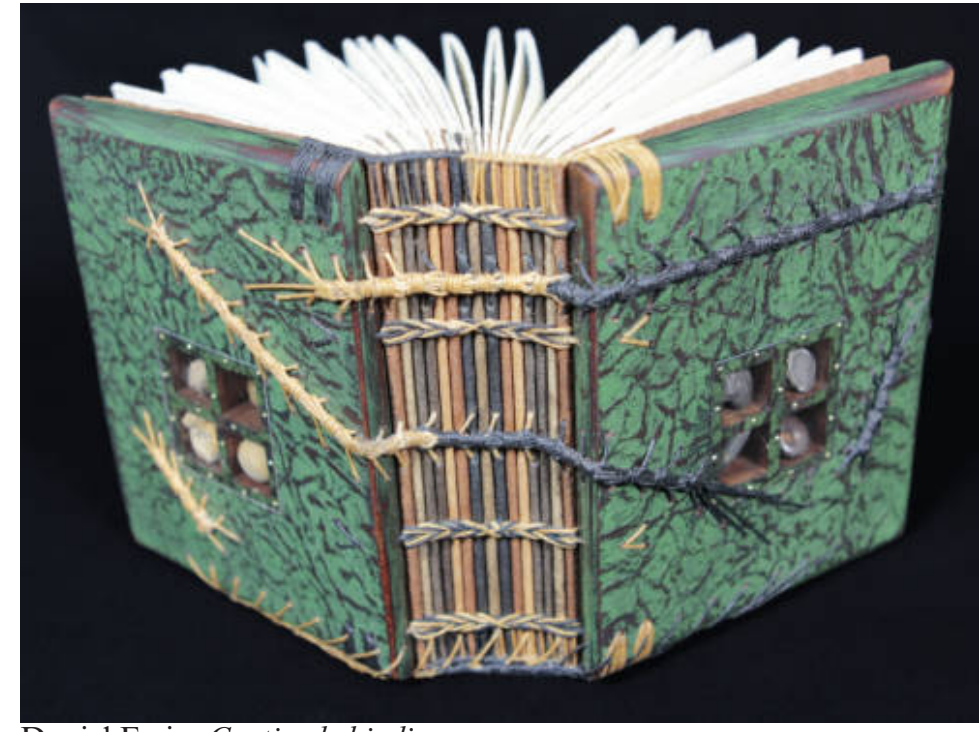
HOW DOES THE DATABASE  
PARTICIPATE IN DISCOURSE?

- ❖ Inclusion of critical terms as metadata such as “publication tradition” and “movement” require critical analysis of work in relation to the field
- ❖ The use of non-standard or subjective terminology and definitions
- ❖ Metadata entry requires prior knowledge and scholarship (history, conceptual framework, etc.) in the field of book arts
- ❖ Artists-as-critics and scholars input metadata
- ❖ Prospective users are given conceptual information about works, but the objective paratextual information (binding, process/technique, etc.) is limited or non-existent

THE CRITICAL DATABASE PORTENDS A DISCOURSE BUILT AROUND THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE FIELD. THE DISCOURSE BELONGS TO SCHOLARS.

TENSION

The field of books arts is in the nascent stages of forming an identity. These two database models reflect the tensions surrounding the roles of and relationships between craft, concept, and criticism in building that identity. They shape the discourse by creating value systems for describing and presenting artists' books.



Daniel Essig, *Centipede binding*

AUTHOR/CREATOR  
-- Choose Author/Creator --

PRESS/PUBLISHER  
-- Choose Press/Publisher --

BINDING  
-- Choose Binding --

PROCESS/TECHNIQUE  
-- Choose Process/Technique --

SUBJECT  
-- Choose Subject --

BOOK TYPE  
-- Choose Book Type --

KEYWORD SEARCH

SEARCH

RESET

Metadata fields, Otis Collections Online



JOAN FLASCH ARTISTS' BOOK COLLECTION  
Lilli Carre, *My Dreams Have Been Quite Strange Lately*



Susan Baker, *Don't Bug the Waitress*

**Project Statement**  
by J. Drucker

Susan Bee and I had long talked about doing a collaborative work. We share many interests and sensibilities. We had experimented with a dialogue/exchange in the mid-1990s, when I was in New Haven. I printed something on the press and then sent her the sheets and she was going to respond and then return the sheets. This never panned out. I forget if we went beyond one round of exchange or not, thinking that we should do the project when we could be in the same place at the same time. A Girl's Life sprang into being when Steve Clay offered to publish a collaboration between us. The inspiration for the book was what I call the "pink magazines" - those publications for tweens that produce a discourse of girl culture. I wrote a long narrative based on Ivanhoe (!) since that was very much in mind at the time. Then we tweaked it into a shorter and ever shorter text (Susan helped) until we had just what remains. She did the collages independently, and then we worked on sequencing and design in several visits she paid to Virginia. The work is truly collaborative and the hybrid sensibility produced exactly the look of lost innocence we were after for the project.

**movement:**  
feminism (AAT)  
postmodern (AAT)

**subject:**  
artists' books (LCSH)

**themes:** girlhood, pop culture [A. Schutte]

**content form:**  
narrative (local)  
collage (local)  
experimental text (local)

**publication tradition:**  
artists' book (local)  
zine (local)

**inspiration:** Pink magazines [J. Drucker]

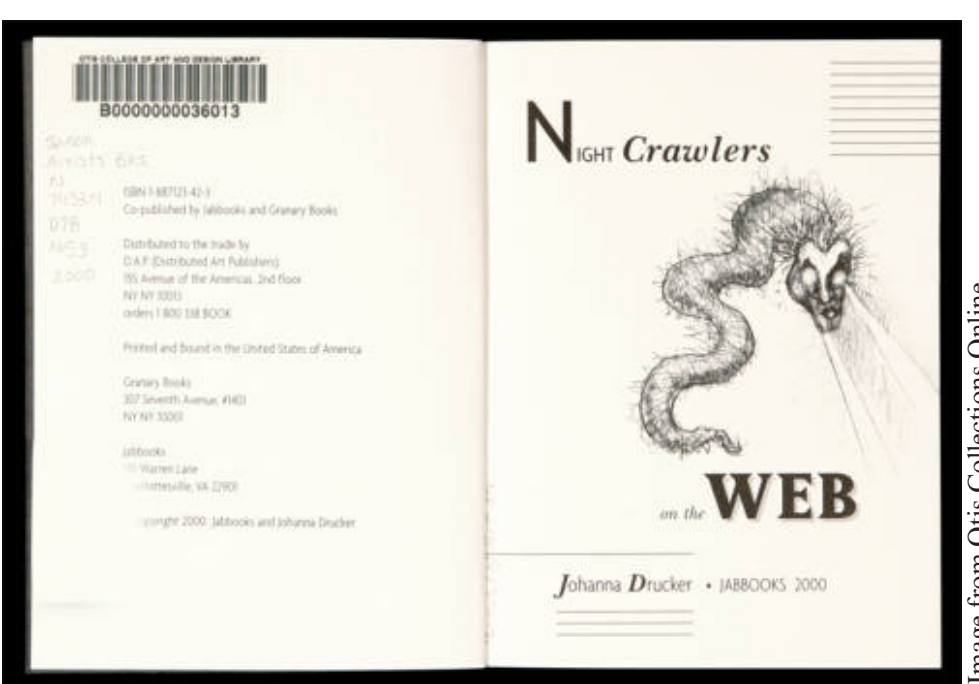
**related works:** Narratology, History of the/my World, Simulant Portrait -- the "girl" books [J. Drucker]

**other influences:** Ivanhoe [J. Drucker]

**community:** other Friendship and also the Ivanhoe group at UVA [J. Drucker]

**note:** The Ivanhoe references are apparent only to someone who is acquainted with that novel, but Becky is unmistakable. [J. Drucker]

Presentation of metadata, Artists' Books Online



Johanna Drucker, *Night Crawlers on the Web*

